

12/08/1997

Massive experiment to train farmers

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The main objectives of the Government's massive experiment in agriculture in Kedah are to train farmers in modern methods of farming and to promote agro-tourism.

Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud said the Ministry and the Kedah Government would enlist foreign agricultural experts to advise and train participants on techniques adopted in countries such as Britain, the United States or Japan.

The Ministry's Agriculture and Veterinary Departments, as well as the Drainage and Irrigation Department and the Malaysian Agricultural Research Development Institute will oversee the 4,000-hectare mixed-crop and agricultural project.

Dr Sulaiman said the project would involve villagers from surrounding areas, adding that they would eventually manage the land and run its activities.

"We will educate them on modern farming techniques, making them an example of a modern farming community," he said after opening the Scouts Movement Asia-Pacific public relations seminar-workshop today.

He said details, including the site's whereabouts, would be finalised on Wednesday, pending some new ideas from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, gained from his recent overseas trip.

Dr Sulaiman said the Ministry had some suggestions including planting new high-yield padi and using biological agents such as ducks and catfish bred in the same area to take care of pests and replace pesticides.

The Ministry, he said, hoped to optimise land usage by planting as many suitable types of crops as possible and breeding livestock and fishes within the same area while utilising it as a tourist attraction.

Dr Sulaiman said the farm, which would employ modern machinery, would also have orchards and aquaculture ponds.

The keyword, he added, was modern farming and agro-tourism that should not only help the nation become self-sufficient in food production and hence lower reliance on food imports, but also provide farmers with higher incomes.

On the usage of planes for fertilising and spraying pesticide, he said it was under consideration, adding that it depended on finding the most economical method to run the 4,000ha land.

The six-day seminar was participated by some 50 scouts from 12 countries who discussed the future direction of the movement and its role in the world arena.

Three scouts also received the highest national scouts medal, the Semangat Padi, in recognition of their contribution.

World Scout Committee chairman Franscisco S. Roman and Asia-Pacific Region Scout Committee chairman Felix Li Tai-Ho received the medal from Dr Sulaiman while the other medal was conferred posthumously on K.S. Maniam.

Maniam, who was the Federal Territory State Commissioner died, on duty at the ninth National Jamboree last week.

Also present were the Scouts' National Chief Commissioner Yang Rashdi Maasom and Asia-Pacific Region regional director Kim Kyu Young.

(END)